HIBISCUS IN PUERTO RICO

By: Mr. Carlos Bryan Arana
Horticulturist in/ch
Ornamental Plants
Agricultural Extension Service
Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico

The genus Hibiscus of the Malvaceae family is represented in Puerto Rico by about a dozen species. of the cultivated hibiscus, the most common is the red, single flowered, Hibiscus rosa-sinensis L., probably our most common ornamental shrub, widely used everywhere on the Island as a hedge plant.

Other common types are the variegated forms of the same specie and the Hibiscus schizopetalus with its attractive, hanging, small flower with fringed petals.

The common Hibiscus is known by different Spanish common names on the Island. In Mayaguez, a fairly large city in the west coast and where the College of Agriculture and Engineering is located, the favorite common name is "Candelaria." In the metropolitan area of San Juan, the capital, the Hibiscus is widely known as "Hibisco" and "Pavonas." Other common names used in other parts of the Island are "Maravilla" and "Amapola." Americans on the Island usually refer to them as the Chinese rose.

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The Hibiscus schizopetalus is less common but widely known in Spanish as "Lira" or "Farolito chino" (Chinese lantern).

Among the earliest and most enthusiast collectors we must recall Mr. T. B. McClelland, a noted horticulturist at the Federal Experiment Station at Mayaguez. From 1923 to 1930 Mr. McClelland selected, imported and hibridized Hibiscus until his collection became quite an attraction for people visiting the Station then. This was still our main source of plant material for some hort courses under Professor Henry T. Cowles in the early fortys.

Mr. O. W. Barret, then working for our State Department of Agriculture colaborated with Mr. McClelland introducing to the San Juan area many of the early varieties and hibrids. Many of these are still kept at the nursery at Trujillo Alto.

Today hibrid hibiscus are favorites of our hobbysts and are widely used specially as specimen plants in landscaping both homegounds and institutions. Here in the tropics, these are in flower yearround and although flowering is more abundant in spring, hibiscus plants are practically in bloom every day. For this reason, plants will be exhausted and short lived if not fertilized often.

They don't have any other serious problems except the same natural enemies that they have in Florida and scales are about the most serious pests here. The hibrid hibiscus are grafted on common stock to insure resistance and heavy blooming.

Several local nurseries carry a good line of hibiscus hibrids, generally obtained from Florida growers.

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A FEMALE BATTLE-AX said to her lawyer: "And you might warn my husband that if he misses a single alimony payment, I'll repossess him."